Guest Artists Add Color . . . . . Week of Entertainment

DANCERS FEATURE FESTIVAL

OF ALL THE HUNDREDS of thousands of notes that are due to be sung, blown, squeezed, struck or otherwise produced at the 1959 Greater Victoria Music Festival, the very first will initiate proceedings at 9 a.m. on Tuesday morning, April 21.

Actually it is impossible to forecast whence that opening note will sound but it will be either from Central Junior High School auditorium or, alternatively, from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church hall.

By

BERT BINNY

In the former case the musical notes are only ancillary; they provide the accompaniment to the folk dancing classes. The folk dancing, for all that it may appear to some as out of place in a music festival, is, nevertheless, the most colorful, gay and vital part of the whole affair and it seems to attract large numbers of spectators. It is a merry whirl of squares, contras, mixers, rounds, marches, reels and even ballets with a wondrous list of romantic and exciting titles such as "Cotton Eye Joe," "Varsouvienne," "Gustaf's Skoal," "Durham Reel" and many others.

The classes encompass all ages and, from the considerable wealth of contestants, honor performers are to be selected. These appear again on Wednesday evening, April 23, in their now familiar surroundings of the Central auditorium.

Adjudicator of the folk dancing is Mrs. Peggy MacFarlane of Vancouver who has served the Victoria festival in the same capacity on several former occasions. Sometimes, when there are scores of dancers on the floor simultaneously — as there very often are — it would seem that Mrs. MacFarlane and all others in similar capacity, must, like the classic Argus, have eyes all around their heads.

Maybe they do but they certainly don't show.

Well, if the first note of the festival does not bound around the cavernous interior of Central auditorium, setting a multitude of feet to dancing, it can be listened for and to at St. Andrew's Hall where it will set a multitude of voices to singing.

Here, at 9.00 a.m. on Tuesday, school choirs compete. They keep right on competing, morning and afternoon, for two days and their efforts culminate in their honor performance which takes place Friday night at Central.

These, like the folk dancing affairs, are generally quite massive. However, mass is not everything in either case and, perhaps, even less so with choirs. Their appeal is the audible rather than the visual and the eye is usually hungrier or, at any rate, has better digestion than the ear.

If, for example, the school choir singing is as good as it was at Victoria High School's Easter concert, then it will be very good; well worth attendance and attention.

Glyndwr Jones of Vancouver judges all the vocal classes which, of course, include the school choirs. In point of fact, having completed a two-day stint with these, he faces a full week with other vocal classes, starting Monday, April 27.

Well-known singer and winner of the coveted Rose Bowl a year or two ago, MARJORIE STURGEON, will be heard at the Music Festival Evening concert on April 29.

But let us not forget the piano accordions. Henry made a lady out of Lizzie and Larry Adler advanced the status of the lowly harmonica—now no longer termed the 'mouth-organ'—to Carnegie Hall level. Now the piano accordion, invented 107 years ago, is creeping inexorably to the front—some say by sheer force of numbers. It made its bow at the annual Talented Students' Recital of the Musical Art Society for the first time this year and some there were who were quite distressed about it. Nevertheless, the accordion can distil some very pleasant music and this is, at least, its third year in the music festival. Like Bottom's version of "Pyramus and Thisbe," its encouragement "needs no excuse." Remember, an accordion concerto was played at the Royal Albert Hall in 1947 by Tollefsen and, that same year, another such concerto, composed by Roy Harris, was broadcast all over the U.S.A.

And prominent English statesman, Lord Balfour, was an ardent performer on the concertina, a similar and contemporary instrument, while Tchaikovsky included four concertinas in his second orchestral suite. Molique and Regondo wrote concertos for it. Percy Grainger utilized it and there are lots of other less-but classical compositions employing concertinas alone, in batches or in combination with strings and pianos.

The accordionists of Greater Victoria or, at any rate, some of them, compete on the evening of Wednesday, April 22. They are to be adjudicated by Edward Gibney of Nanaimo and they perform in the Lower Hall at St. Andrew's Presbyterian.

Instrumentalists, bands and orchestras perform Thursday afternoon and all Friday with strings and string ensembles being judged by Victoria Symphony concertmaster, Clifford Evens. Brasses, woodwinds and bands play to adjudicator William Cole, of the University of Washington.

The recent concert in Victoria by the "Wind Sinfonietta" from the University of Washington did something more than provide an evening of very fine musical entertainment. It submerged for all time the notion that the total effectiveness of a band resided in its twin capacities to make the maximum amount of noise and to maintain uniform tempo. It showed quite clearly that bands are capable of far better things no matter whether the band be called a "concert band," a "wind sinfonietta" or anything else.

Soprano, ANNE HARRIS, 1958 winner of the B.C. electric Rose Bowl appears again at the Music Festival, this time as a guest artist.

This alone suggests that bands and earplugs are not irretrievably associated. The former are interesting as well as thrilling; they can provide music for musicians as well as majorettes.

Also on Friday, April 24, the piano classes start. Adjudicated by Miss Nellie Tholen of Lewis and Clarke College in Portland, they continue, morning and afternoon, right through the following week and always in the St. Andrew's social room.

MARY GOWARD, one of Victoria's top violinsts, is a guest artist at Music Festival evening concert.

There are always oceans of pianists, some newcomers and some hard-bitten veterans. There are duets, two-piano teams and soloists. There are the unpredictable performers, the calm, the agitated, the stylists, the statuesque, the grim, the sad, the happy, the ardent and the what-does-all this-mean-anyway? types. Collectively and from the audience point of view, the piano classes provide a remarkable fund of entertainment from start to finish.

Competitors run into the hundreds, sometimes 30 or 40 in a single class. But somewhere, almost swallowed up in a tribe of fellow performers and, maybe, handicapped by the air of monotomy which gathers around the later exponent of an oft-repeated test piece, there may be the virtuoso of not many years hence. Comparative studies of music festival results in former years will establish who such virtuosos could turn out to be but not always. It is much more interesting to go and listen and pick your own favorite without, as it were, studying the form.

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The Speech Arts classes open in St. Andrew's lower hall on Tuesday, April 28, before adjudicator Mrs. Lily Harper. These classes show a distinct increase in competition this year.

The adult sections are set for the evening of Wednesday, April 29, but there are, judging by records and past performances, some very fine performers among the juniors.

Of course, over these two days, April 28 and 29, there is a threee-way choice of attractions; vocal, piano or speech arts. Seeing that they are all performing in the same building, it will be possible to go from one class to another rapidly and without getting the feet wet. Particularly are such transitions both feasible and convenient with a season ticket which, for $2, admits the holder to anything and everything. Without this ticket there would be economic considerations; a separate entrance fee for each class.

From Monday, April 27, through Friday, May 1, there are special concerts and competitions every evening at Central Junior Auditorium.

On Monday there is the official opening to be performed by Mayor Scurrah and performances by High School choirs.

On Tuesday, vocal ensembles and pianists in the performers' sonata class compete.

On Wednesday, there will be children's choirs and pianists in the performers' concert group class.

Thursday provides adult choral competition for the CBC award and, on Friday, winners of the B.C. Electric Rose Bowl and the City of Victoria Medallion are to be decided.

In addition to all this, these evening sessions are to be further enhanced by the presentation of former festival winners. These include soprano, Anne Harris (April 27), soprano Marjorie Sturgeon (April 29) and violinists, Wendy Gerry and Mary Goward (April 28.)

The end of artistry is not to accumulate material things such as cups, plaques, certificates or even hard cash. All these things are encouraging and go to the worthiest recipients. But their greatest value lies, not so much in what they are, but in what they signify; namely, that whosoever receives them has, to merit this, given most. They have given most in pleasure to others or in the promise of so doing in the future.

Thus laurels won are actually outward and visible signs of inward and invisible pleasure received by others because no true art is selfish.

If award winners and, indeed, all competitors realize this as so very many of them do, they will feel the lack of audiences very keenly. They have something to share and no one to share it with. The more people come to hear them, the better they will play and sing in the future.

Attendance at the Music Festival can render a very real service to the music of the whole city and, without music and its kindred arts, any city would be a sorry spot in which to live.